United Nations E/CN.6/2009/NGO/42

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2008

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-third session
2-13 March 2009
Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by African Action on AIDS, Centre for Women, the Earth, the Devine, Hadassah: Women's Zionist Organization of America, International Alliance of Women, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Council of Women, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Salvation Army, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women, Women's International Zionist Organization, Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2009/1.

08-65551 (E) 210109

Statement*

Legislation for gender equality and the empowerment of women in care work

The undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, member organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, firmly believe that essential prerequisites that enable social systems to function all over the world are care work and social provision carried out primarily by women and girls at no payment or under extremely low payment conditions. It is evident that care work is a major contributor to economic dynamics and growth in all economic systems. According to the Human Development Index, US$ 16 trillion of the global output is "invisible", US$ 11 trillion of which is attributable to the contribution of women. Independent of the political and economic systems under which this work is performed, a general view seems to prevail that the unpaid work of women may be expanded easily and without limitations. However, girls' and women's unpaid care work is also recognised as one of the most persistent barriers to gender equality.

In light of this dichotomy, the undersigned NGOs request that legal frameworks are put in place at international and national levels under which care work at all levels and under all conditions is performed. It is also essential that mechanisms are put in place to monitor the implementation of such norms. It should be recalled at this stage, that commitments on the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS, have been made by Governments at the international level, including at the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), as well as in the outcomes of sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women since 1996. International Human Rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also recognise the obligations that State Parties have to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

The undersigned non-governmental organisations, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, therefore wish to draw the attention of United Nations Member States to the need for:

- A valuation of unpaid work and of 'satellite accounts', including the improvement of methodologies concerning time-use studies;

- Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and in particular of article 5a) on the elimination of prejudices as well as customary and all other practices, which are based on the idea of the inferiority of girls and women compared to men and on stereotyped gender roles;

* Issued without formal editing.

- Explicit policy action to be taken to eliminate sexist stereotypes in care work and to encourage men to take up their caring and domestic responsibilities. Such actions should include:

    - o the establishment of a policy framework on care-giving, the goal being to value care; to undertake measures to ensure equality of responsibilities; to bring about increases in the supply of services; and to improve the conditions under which care work is carried out

    - o public awareness campaigns in order to promote the value of "shared care"

    - o the establishment of a legal framework conducive for decent working and gainful employment conditions in care and social provision professions, including social security rights

    - o the establishment of a legal framework enabling the public and private sector to opt for care-friendly policies.